

SOCIALIST PARTY of GREAT BRITAIN

REPORT of the PROCEEDINGS of the 63rd ANNUAL CONFERENCE

held at:

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1, on FRIDAY, SATURDAY and  
SUNDAY, 24th, 25th and 26th MARCH, 1967

Attendances at Conference:

	<u>Delegates Present</u>	<u>Branches Represented</u>
<u>Friday</u>	30	16
Not represented (in morning only)		Haringey
<u>Saturday</u>	30	15
Not represented		Dartford
<u>Sunday</u>	30	15
Not represented		Dartford

Comrade Edmunds was elected as Chairman, and it was agreed that the Standing Orders Committee act as Tellers.

FRIDAY SESSION

BRANCHES, MEMBERSHIP & ORGANISATION

Branch Structure.

Cde. Crump (S.W.London), drew attention to the fact that a resolution at Conference 1966 called for an investigation into Branch structure, especially in London, but he felt that there was apathy about the matter and requested information. Cde. A. George (Bloomsbury) said that Branches had been pressed to seriously consider the proposition and one or two had made changes: but the choice of action lay with the Branches - nobody could compel them. Other Delegates stated that their Branches had found amalgamation impractical: many members had to travel a long way and some amalgamations would make travelling impossible in terms of time - leave alone cost. Amalgamation could even disrupt a Branch that was functioning efficiently at the moment. Cde. Vallar (Glasgow) told delegates that his Branch had fully discussed the matter. They had come to the conclusion that Glasgow Branch should divide into four sections and work in the Constituencies of Glasgow, North, South, East and West. It was necessary that the Party structure should be along these lines, i.e. organised on a Parliamentary Constituency basis.

Estates Management.

Cde. Mattingley (Mid.Herts), enquired whether Estates bequeathed to the Party were now being managed by a Solicitor or by the Estates Management Committee alone. He was advised that the Estates Management Committee was set up by the E.C. to safeguard the interests of the Party in respect of bequests under Wills in favour of the Party. Where need be, the use of a Solicitor was made. Normally, the technicalities of buying and selling were made through a solicitor, but this did not mean that the E.C. regarded it sufficient to hand over to a Solicitor the whole responsibility of protecting the Party's interests in cases where it had been bequeathed sums of money and estates. The function of the Estates Management Committee was to act on behalf of the E.C. and to pass its instructions on to Solicitors, and to act as the Party's watch-dogs. Solicitors were professional people employed to do a job but this did not mean that we should hand over lock, stock and barrel our business and let a Solicitor determine the extent and limit of our interests without consulting us and accepting our instructions. Mid.Herts. Branch then asked whether the E.C. was satisfied regarding the rent collection under the Boucher Estate (now practically settled) and were informed that the E.C. were satisfied. Mid-Herts. Branch urged that Estates left to the Party should be immediately referred to Solicitors. One or two delegates said that it would be ridiculous to hand over such matters uncritically into the complete charge of Solicitors without maintaining a check on their activities. Why should we do this with Solicitors and not with other people? We should be glad that we had willing and competent Party members to serve on the Estates Management Committee to protect Party interests.

Note: The following proposed new Rule standing in the name of Swansea Branch was lost 15 - 19 during Conference: - "That in the event of bequests involving real estate it shall be the duty of the Treasurer and/or Trustees to refer the matter to Solicitors".

AMENDMENTS TO RULES

Rule 1. (Charge for Membership Card).

Lewisham: "That Rule 1 be amended as follows:- 'in the second paragraph, line 4, the sentence beginning with the word 'The' and ending with '3d' be deleted'". Carried 28 - 9

Rule 2. (Lapsing of Members)

Lewisham: On line 11 the following be inserted between the words "Branch" "and" - "subject to Executive Committee ratification". Carried 22 - 12

Rule 2. (Membership Dues)

Birmingham: Delete "6d" in line 1 and insert "one shilling". Lost 14 - 26

AMENDMENTS TO RULE (Contd.):

AMEND

Rule

11

Rule 9 (Membership Dues)  
Birmingham: Delete "4d" in line two and insert "9d".  
Amendment - Southend: Delete "4d" in line two and insert "8d". falls.

Rule 6. (No. of members required to form a Branch):  
Haringey: Delete in line three "six" and insert "ten". Lost 4 - 33

Rule 8. (Entitlement to representation at Conferences)  
S.W.London: Delete the words "(except in the case of new Branches as qualified under Rule 22) as bracketed". Lost 9 - 23

Rule 9 falls.

Rule 12 (Qualification for membership of E.C.)  
S.W.London: Delete the words "a member of less than 6 months standing shall not be eligible for candidature". Lost 13 - 26

Rule 13 (Lapsing of E.C. Membership)  
Greenford: Delete all after "acceptable to the Executive Committee in five seven". Lost 10 - 31

Rule 14 (Reports on E.C. work to Delegate Meetings and Conference)  
Mid-Herts: Delete last sentence and replace by:- "They shall report to the Delegate Meeting and Annual Conference including the activities of all their Officers and sub-Committees". Carried 26 - 14

Rule 17 (Terms of Reference for E.C.)  
Haringey: Add the words:- "and to this end may appoint sub-committees. Names shall be called for". Carried 24 - 14

Amendment - Bloomsbury: Delete "Names shall be called for". Lost 6 - 22

Rule 19 (Election of Party Officers)  
Paddington: Delete "Assistant Secretary" on line two and "Assistant Treasurer" on line three. Lost 12 - 24

Rule 19 (Party Officers' reports to Delegate Meetings and Conference)  
Mid-Herts: Append after the last sentence:- "The General Secretary, Treasurer and Central Organiser shall report to the Delegate Meeting and Annual Conference". Carried 22 - 16

Rule 20 (Qualification to act as Delegates at Delegate Meetings)  
S.W.London: Delete all after "Delegates" in line six and up to and including "meeting" in line eleven. Carried 21 - 19

Rule 22 ("Qualifications to act as Delegates at Conference)  
S.W.London: Delete the words "Delegates must have been members for at least six months immediately preceding Conference. Delegates of Branches formed within that period shall sit and vote only with the consent of the Conference". Lost 17 - 23

Rule 22 (Size of Branch Delegations at Conference)  
Haringey: Delete the first sentence and insert instead - "Each Branch shall be entitled to send one Delegate for every ten members". Lost 3 - 37

Amendment: Paddington: Amend to read: "Each Branch shall be entitled to send two Delegates for every ten or part of ten members". Lost 8 - 38

Rule 22 (Qualifications to represent the Party as Candidate for political office)  
S.W.London: That Rule 27 be amended to read:- "Candidates for Political Office shall have passed an examination set by the Executive Committee". Lost 18 - 35

Amendment - Southend: "Candidates for Political Office shall have been members for at least six months and have sat an examination set by the Executive Committee" Lost 4 - 34

AMENDMENTS TO RULE (Contd):

Rule 28 (Qualifications to sign Candidate's Nomination paper)  
Paddington: Delete all after the word "Constituency" in line 4. Lost 5 - 32

Rule 28 Birmingham: Delete all after "Constituency" in line four and insert  
 "Signatories to candidates' nomination papers must be approved by the  
 Executive Committee". Lost 8 - 33

Amendment - Bloomsbury: Add after "Executive Committee" "but a majority  
 of the signatories must be members of the Party". Lost 5 - 38

Rule 28 Swansea: "That Rule 28 be abolished". Lost 5 - 36

Swansea's proposed new Rule mentioned above Lost 15 - 19

Item for Discussion: (S.W.London): "The Annual Conference".

Resolution: Grant & Ballard (Paddington): "That the E.C. be recommended to set up  
 a sub-Committee to review Conference procedure, date and locale, and report its  
 suggestions to the next Delegate Meeting". Carried 22 - 4

Cde. Crump (S.W.London) in opening, drew attention to the bad time-keeping by members and the late starting of Conference. This gave a very bad impression to members of the public and any Press representatives who might have arrived on time. Valuable time was lost and delegates should be more responsible. One delegate stated that Conference is mis-used in that Branches continue to put forward the same resolutions which are regularly lost on instructed voting. Cde. George stated that members of Bloomsbury Branch had several ideas on the subject. The gross time taken over Conference was 16 hours, including breaks - 2½ days. The business could be dealt with in two days from 9 to 5 o'clock. This was the customary hours of attendance for a number of organisations, including political parties and trade unions. Some Bloomsbury members thought that we could move away from Easter for Conference and hold it on a Saturday and Sunday - perhaps during the week-end of the new fixed Spring Holiday, which would leave Bank Holiday free. Or we could still hold Conference on the Saturday and Sunday. Easter was a bad time for Conferences in London as few halls were available at our prices. Some delegates thought that three days was desirable. We needed more time to discuss theoretical and political matters which sometimes arose at the last minute. Cde. Phillips drew attention to the dull and irksome Conference pre-occupation with instructed amendments to Rules and Resolutions. Some method should be devised to end this time-wasting part of Conference. A member of each sub-Committee should be present when their section of the E.C. Report came up for review. In this connection it was pointed out that only when Conference started was it possible to agree an Agenda: that nobody had ever complained of lack of information because of the absence of sub-Committee members. The General Secretary and others present invariably supplied information, and wherever practicable Conference was advised when sub-Committees and Officers would be present and arranged the Agenda accordingly. Cde. May, Central Organiser, made a plea for a more lively and interesting Conference, pointing out that amendments to some of the rules was very important and warranted time for discussion. How could we hope to change points of view if no views were aired on the grounds that the resolutions were instructed ones? Regarding the composition of the E.C. Report, Cde. May questioned the use of much of it. It might be better to let the E.C. sub-Committees report orally to Conference, it would perhaps induce better and livelier discussion. He would like to hear more delegates talking of their Branch activities. Cde. Cox (E.C. member) considered that we needed a revision of the procedure relating to instructed resolutions. We should consider having the resolutions placed upon the Agenda as now and then discussed at Conference. There would be no voting at this stage, only an exchange of views. Delegates would then report back to their Branches on the views expressed. Branches could then discuss these views and could then vote by ballot papers sent to Head Office where the results would be declared.

ELECTORAL ACTIVITIES

Item for Discussion: "Organisation of future Electoral Action" (Greenford).

Cde. R. Critchfield pointed out the various snags which we have come up against in the present G.L.C. Elections and suggested we should give closer attention to the difficulties encountered and prepare ourselves better for the next Parliamentary Election. Cde. Grant (Parliamentary Cttee) agreed that the matter should be gone into in greater detail. However, it would be a mistake to think that the present G.L.C. Election is a training ground for the future. The current G.L.C. Constituencies are larger than the Parliamentary ones and thus it is easier for us to find ten members to sign the Nomination Papers under Rule 28 now than it will be at the next Parliamentary Elections. Cde. May, Central Organiser, gave information about the present campaign. The Election Addresses had to be reduced to 40,000 because there was no free postal distribution as at first supposed. Proofs of the Address were now with the Printer and work will shortly be proceeding on the preparation of Addresses, insertion in envelopes and distribution by members. He appealed to London members to help. The National newspapers were taking a great interest - this is a turning-point in the history of the Party. We were contesting in four different areas, larger than in any Parliamentary Constituency, and we should make the most of it. Some general comments were made:- Before we ventured on Electoral activity we should have an answer to people who say they are not going to vote for a Candidate who is not going to take his seat. Electoral activity should not be undertaken unless the money, resources and signatories can be obtained from the working class in the area. We should canvass for money and try and establish our position beforehand. Regarding publicity, some delegates thought this was our main purpose - to get the Party known; others thought that we are not concerned mainly with publicity - we are contesting seriously for the control of Parliamentary machinery. Views were expressed, both for and against, contesting consistently the same Constituency. Unfortunately, we did not have consistently the required ten signatories - members change their addresses. It was not necessarily advisable to contest a Constituency merely because it contains ten members. These members may not be "working" members: some may not be able to sign the Nomination Paper because of their jobs.

In reply to a question, Cde. Vanni (Glasgow) said that in the forthcoming Municipal Election in Glasgow they are hoping to contest North Kelvin and Ruchill Ward. One member said that sympathisers should be allowed to sign the Nomination Papers because we are prepared to accept votes from people who are not members of the Party. Cde. Buick (Haringey) pointed out that the four Constituencies were not chosen at random. Three out of the four we would have chosen anyway as they had a lot of members there and active Branches. Although the Parliamentary Committee made the four recommendations to the E.C. it was only on the understanding that Branches were prepared to undertake the work.

COMPANION PARTIES

Greetings from the following Companion Parties were read:-

League of Democratic Socialists, Austria.

Socialist Party of Australia (Sydney)

Socialist Party of Canada (G.E.C. in Winnipeg and Victoria Local),

Socialist Party of New Zealand (Wellington and Auckland Branch)

World Socialist Party of Ireland.

World Socialist Party of the United States.

It was agreed unanimously that the greetings of Conference be sent to all Parties and the Group in Jamaica.

Socialist Party of Canada: Dispute.

Items for Discussion: (a) Paddington: "What further information has the Executive Committee on the split in the Canadian Party and what assistance can the S.P.G.B. give in settling this disagreement? What attitude should the Party adopt towards the two Groups?"

(b) S.W.London: "The dispute among Canadian Socialists"

At the request of the E.C. Cde. George had prepared a paper on the events leading up to this dispute and the formation of another Party in Canada. This paper had been before the E.C. a week prior to Conference and then sent to Branches. Cde. George told Conference that since this paper had been duplicated we had been advised of other events:-

- (a) Montreal. On 23rd February the members here had rescinded the resolution to resign from the S.P. of Canada and now sought G.E.C. permission to form a local in Montreal 'in anticipation that the S.P. of Canada alone, or with members of the W.S.P. of Canada, will be holding a referendum in the near future on constitutional matters that will solve the existing difficulties between the two Parties'.
- (b) With the Minutes received from the Montreal Group were photo-copies of some long letters passing between two Comrades in Montreal and the G.E.C. and Cde. Milne (The G.E.C. Recording Secretary). From these it was made clear to Montreal that any reasoned approach by Toronto to the G.E.C. would be well received but that further communication with ex-Vancouver was out.

Conference also needed to know that the E.C. had three letters to which replies had been held in abeyance pending Conference discussion on the dispute. These were from the G.E.C. dated 16th December 1966: from two members in Montreal dated 14th January, 1967 (now rather out-dated by the turn of events) and one dated 4th February from the Vancouver Local of the newly-formed W.S.P. of Canada asking for its particulars to be printed in the "Socialist Standard".

The E.C.'s general feeling was that there was no difference between the two groups on socialist principles and that we should avoid aggravating the situation. Cde. Cox (E.C. member) added that E.C. thinking at this stage was for Conference to express the hope that the two Parties in Canada would see the need and the ways and means of getting together and to solve their differences: it would be most unwise for Conference to pass Judgment.

In view of the fact that the paper on the dispute contained a considerable amount of information, some delegates having only just seen it, it was agreed to defer the matter until Saturday. (An Amendment to defer until the Delegate Meeting had been defeated).

#### SATURDAY SESSION

##### Socialist Party of Canada (contd):

Cde. Crump (S.W.London) told Conference that his Branch had written to all the parties to the dispute and had had answers from Vancouver, Victoria and Winnipeg. Bearing in mind the past efforts of Cde. McClatchie and other S.P.G.B. members to help, S.W.London Branch saw very little to be offered from this end: if there is to be a re-union the initiative, desire and the goodwill required must emanate from socialists in Canada. Short of this we can only consider (1) Recognising both Groups (2) Recognising only one (3) Recognising neither of them. His Branch failed to see how two Socialist Parties could be recognised when both had the same Declaration of Principles and its hostility Clause. The majority view of the Branch was that the G.E.C. was more in the right than the Local and, because of this, if we were going to make a judgment, we should come down on the side of the G.E.C.

Note. At this point Mid-Herts Branch put up three resolutions which were accepted for discussion. Towards the end of the debate the first resolution was amended by Bloomsbury Branch, the second and third withdrawn. This was followed by a resolution from Glasgow Branch. For the sake of clarity, the resolutions and the actions taken upon them are herewith followed by a precis of the debate:-

*1760-8*  
Resolutions: Mid-Herts. Branch: "That this Conference views with concern the division of socialists in Canada into two organisations. This division can promote the interests of the socialist movement and we hope that socialists in Canada will not permit such a situation to continue, bearing in mind the harm it will do to the World Socialist Movement".

Amendment: Bloomsbury Branch: "That this Conference is of the opinion that the dispute is an issue which should be resolved by the Canadian comrades themselves. Conference does not consider that any reason has been advanced which could justify the establishment of a further Socialist Party in addition to the present Socialist Party of Canada".

Amendment Carried	17 - 7
As a sub-Resolution "	18 - 6

Resolution: Mid-Herts. Branch: "That this Conference recommends both divisions to be written to in the following manner:-

- (i) Both to be sent Resolution 1.
- (ii) S.P. of Canada suggesting that they make a call for new Rules to be submitted to a special referendum. Call to include W.S.P. of Canada.
- (iii) W.S.P. of Canada suggesting that they submit new Rules for special referendum, and take any action under the new Rules that they think necessary".

(Withdrawn).

Resolution: Mid-Herts. Branch: "That this Conference instructs the E.C. to leave unchanged the S.S. Directory of Companion Parties until this matter has been resolved".

(Withdrawn).

Resolution: Glasgow Branch: "That this Conference instructs the E.C. to leave unchanged the S.S. Directory of Companion Parties".

Carried 18 - 3

Cde. Knight, Mid-Herts, said that the dispute had been going on for three years and there were no signs that, if we refrained from expressing a view, it will be solved. Whilst we should refrain from sitting in judgment his Branch felt that we could do something without in any way condemning either Group. Therefore his Branch had put up three resolutions. If passed, they would clearly indicate that, although we do not take sides, we do not agree that the formation of another group is the solution. On the contrary, we think it is harmful to the socialist movement generally, and we have the right and duty to say so. At first sight, the dispute appears to centre around a charge against a member in January 1965, but when looked at more closely, it is really a dispute about the control of members-at-large which had been going on for some time before this; the issue was as to who should control these members - the G.E.C. or the Locals? Cde. Knight suspected that the G.E.C. did not make an effort to adjust themselves in any way: they kept strictly to the rules. The groupings were: Winnipeg, Victoria, the new Vancouver and Montreal Locals on the one hand and the ex-Vancouver and Toronto Locals on the other. The aims of the Mid-Herts. resolutions are to suggest to both groups that they should both try and step towards each other - the S.P. of Canada should enfranchise those who have left in order that they can take part in a call for new Rules and the referendum to which such proposed new Rules would be submitted. Were it possible, the preferable arrangement would be for the members in Canada to have a Conference and set up new rules. They could then discuss the centre-piece of the controversy - the control of members-at-large.

Cde. Baldwin (E.C. member) hoped that the three resolutions of Mid-Herts. would be carried whilst another delegate suggested that it might be better if each Local had local autonomy and be responsible for its own area and members-at-large, the Party to have occasional referendums. Cde. Walsh (non-delegate, Paddington) observed that, although the dispute was fully reported in the paper on the subject, one important aspect had been omitted, i.e. the personality clashes and differences that must certainly exist. Socialist understanding must involve recognition of personal differences as well as economic and socialist ones. We should remember that if socialist cannot get together among themselves they are not in a position to reconcile the whole world.

Cde. McClatchie (ex-E.C. member) advised that, as shown in the paper, those who opposed the G.E.C. regarded it as dictatorial and autocratic whilst the G.E.C. considered it had been unfairly denounced whilst endeavouring to carry out its elected tasks in accordance with the Rules and Constitution of the Party. He gave a résumé

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his conversations with members in Canada during his visit in 1966. During this time he had urged upon all members that he met that in the overall interests of the Socialist and Socialist movement a conciliatory attitude was desirable and should take precedence over disagreements on Constitutional interpretations. Cde. Donnelly (Glasgow) took the view that all three resolutions (of Mid-Herts) should be opposed on the grounds that they did not meet the situation: the matter was an internal one in the S.P. of Canada and although a tragedy, there was nothing we could do about it. We know little about the newly-formed W.S.P. of Canada and we are not affiliated to them. Our position should be to support the S.P. of Canada and to continue to do so unless we become convinced that they are not socialists. Cde. R. Cock (Birmingham) saw the three Mid-Herts. resolutions as attempts by democratic methods to solve personality clashes in the S.P. of Canada but he thought that almost nothing helpful could be done by the S.P.G.B. and we could easily make matters worse by making official pronouncements along the lines of some of the suggestions already made. Perhaps we could offer the socialists of both Parties temporary membership of the S.P.G.B. until they could do something about it themselves.

Speaking to the Bloomsbury Branch Amendment to the Mid-Herts. first resolution, Cde. F. Lawrence argued that the resolution took us nowhere - it merely expressed general sentiments upon which all were agreed. We should go a little further - hence Bloomsbury's Amendment. He had considered Cde. George's statement carefully and the facts were clear. In fact, he doubted if there were members in Canada who had as clear a picture of the dispute as shown by this document. It is a problem that had to be resolved inside the S.P. of Canada - it did not justify breaking away, an action which not only would not solve the problem but also created further problems. The intention of the Amendment was to convey this point of view and to make it clear that the onus was not on one group alone but upon both to bring about a solution.

Cde. Bevereux (Bloomsbury), seconding the Amendment, stressed that the facts were well set out in the document, without comment. Forming a breakaway organisation did not solve the problem. This had to be resolved within the S.P. of Canada - it was the responsibility of socialists in Canada, including those who, at the moment, were outside the Party. The intention of the Amendment is not to impute any fault on either side.

Cde. P. Lawrence (Lewisham) stated that there is no question on which we can disagree with either of these groups. Both groups put forward a case which is socialist in content and we are faced with a situation where there are two Parties. He hoped that at present we would do nothing to come down on one side or the other. At a later date we might have to give tacit recognition to both.

#### PUBLICITY

Comrade Bradley (Publicity Committee), explained in reply to a question arising out of the E.C.'s Report, that 1966 had been a very busy and important year but that a great deal of the Committee's time had been taken up in getting out material required by the Special Committee on Publicity.

#### LITERATURE      Instructed Resolutions:-

Swansea: "That this Conference is of the opinion that the time is ripe for the Party to establish a weekly paper, and calls upon the E.C. to investigate the possibility and report to next Conference".

Southend: Amendment: "Delete the last word and insert 'Delegate Meeting'."

Amendment lost	3 - 32
Resolution "	5 - 36

Paddington: "This Conference instructs the E.C. to examine the possibility of increasing the size and raising the price of the "Socialist Standard" to help cover the cost of wider distribution, at the same time allowing attractive rates to subscribers".

Bloomsbury: Amendment: "Delete all after the word 'distribution'".

Amendment lost	14 - 26
Resolution "	19 - 22

Cde. Lawrence (Bloomsbury) stated that they felt that subscribers should pay the full rate for the "S.S" whereas at the moment they do not pay for postage. Cde. Levitt (Paddington) pointed out the need to have as large a subscribers' list as possible as

160-89  
 this would mean a firm financial basis for future planning. Cde. Cox (Paddington) stated that the Branch wanted wider distribution of the "S.S" with greater advertising, aiming at a large increase in subscribers which would allow them to have cheaper rates. Present subscribers should always have a subscription form available to enable them to try and get further subscribers.

S.W. London: "That in view of the need to expand the scope of the "S.S" sales, its price be increased to 1/-".

Southend: Amendment: "Delete the last two words (1/-) and insert '9d'".

Amendment lost 4 - 27  
 Resolution " 9 - 32

Paddington: "This Conference instructs the E.C. to take active and urgent steps to ensure distribution of the "S.S" by a wholesale newsagent, and that the sum of £500 be allocated immediately for this project and advertising".

Lost 18 - 23

S.W. London Amendment: "Delete all after the word 'newsagents'". Lost 11 - 29

Southend: Amendment: "Delete £500 and insert "Up to £1,000)". " 5 - 36

Cde. Levitt (Paddington) stated that we have now got some money in hand and we should make use of it. We should make an extra effort to get the "S.S" placed on bookstalls, using a wholesale news agency. The Party should not grudge £500 for this purpose. Glasgow, S.W. London and Mid-Herts. thought that the best way to sell the "S.S" was from door-to-door. Give Glasgow £1,000 and they will sell as many as any Agent!

Cde. Garnham (Central Literature Sales Committee), read from a letter received from a distribution agency whose services are being considered by the E.C. The letter read had not been discussed by the E.C. The essence of the offer was for the distribution of the "S.S" to about 12 major cities plus inner London. The total distributed per month would be 5,000, 1,500 of which would be in the inner London area. Total cost per month, £35. For six months - £210, plus additional charges if the suburbs of London were covered. Covers only returned for unsold copies in the provinces. The Company asked that serious consideration be given to raising the price to at least 1/- per copy but did not consider 2/- too much for a monthly journal.

Cde. Buick stated that "Peace News" had recently been increased to 1/- per copy, adding that as wholesale newsagents have not been tried before we should try them and at the same time spend money on advertising in conjunction with such a venture. Cde. Howard, S.S. Production Committee, stated that more than one wholesale newsagent had been tried in the past without success. Neither news agencies nor newsagents were interested in low-priced monthly journals for which they received little in return as against the high return dailies and weeklies.

A delegate asked how could we expect newsagents to set aside valuable space for an unknown and unremunerative journal. To pay out money in this way was merely making a gift to the wholesaler.

SUNDAY SESSION Instructed Resolutions (continued):

S.W. London Branch: "That this Conference instructs the E.C. to put out a call via E.C. Reports to all Party members willing to put their names in the "S.S" as contacts". Carried 25 - 14

Cde. Crump (S.W. London) said that Conference 1966 had called for a complete overhaul of the "S.S" Directory. His Branch wanted much of the current information removed and the contacts expanded. Cde. Grant (Paddington) regarded it as essential that we had a contact listed for every London Constituency at least. Cde. F. Lawrence (Central Branch Secretary) stated that Central Branch members had been canvassed and some replies had been received and passed on to the General Secretary who had passed them to the S.S. Production Committee vide the 1966 Resolution. (The suggestion of Cde. Grant (Parliamentary Cttee) was noted for the E.C.

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OUTREAS CONTACTS

Item for Discussion: Paddington (Goodman & Hamme): "That this Conference recommends that the E.C. take immediate steps to arrange for the publication of a special journal in conjunction with "7 Days for Socialism": to contain contributions from all Companion Parties and Groups". Carried Overwhelmingly.

Cde. George stated that the E.C. were still undecided about this matter. We were going to run a 'Seven Days' in Gt. Britain but despite letters to Companion Parties on the matter some weeks ago plus reminders we had heard only from Ireland who requested speaking help, and from New Zealand who undertook to make it a special advertising week for literature etc. The week was planned for the first week in September to coincide with Labour Day week throughout the North American Continent. The other Parties had limited fields of operation and it was unfair and unrealistic to expect equal effort from them. They all know that in September the "S.S" would be dealing with the Centenary of the publication of "Capital" and that we would, with them, be pushing the sales.

Cde. Lawrence (Bloomsbury) was told by Cde. Goodman that in the event of one Group or Party failing to respond the proposed special journal should not be published. Cde. Lawrence contended that the idea of such a journal was thoroughly impractical. The "S.S" is the joint organ of the S.P.G.B. and the W.S.P. of Ireland yet, since this amalgamation took place we have received practically no copy from the W.S.P. of I. Times are bad in Ireland and there are also limitations in other areas. The whole concept would result in an unfair burden on the S.P.G.B. to write, edit, and publish this proposed special journal/magazine.

Item for Discussion: Paddington: "The desirability of production by the Party of stiff covered publications at suitable prices for distribution through the book trade: covering subjects in the fuller detail required by the growing number of people interested in Socialism".

Plar Resolution: Paddington: "That this Conference recommends the E.C. to immediately draw up a programme of publications in book form to be brought out by the Party on subjects requiring a fuller approach than the existing type of Party publications enable". Carried 19-13

There was considerable discussion on this, both for and against. Cde. Grant (Paddington) stated that times have changed - we have now more money and more people have more money and more interest. There is a growing appetite for what we have to say and write and a new wave of interest in Marxist theory. Publishers are finding it quite profitable to bring out Marxist literature, and this is of significance. What has the Party to offer? A limited but good selection of brief pamphlets and a valuable body of material in the "Socialist Standard". We need to bring out material of greater substance than our existing pamphlets provide. Booksellers are not interested in selling shilling pamphlets - there is no incentive to distribute them. We need books as distinct from pamphlets: something more substantial. Cde. Cook (Birmingham) supported the idea. We would reach a different public, i.e. University students etc. who would not normally bother with pamphlets and who preferred tougher meat. We could go out for a speciality audience. There is the possibility of providing bibliographies of our studies and other books not geared to immediate events. Pamphlets can become out-dated. Cde. MacDowall (Pamphlets Committee) stated that there was doubt in members' minds as to whether we would really be more successful with a hard-back selling at, say, 3/6d. This has been tried before with no success. Books take time to produce and this might interfere with our normal propaganda efforts. If we wished to actually write books and publish them, Cde. McClatchie is at present writing a History of the Working Class Movement, 1848 - 1948, which might be suitable. We should remember that it takes a tremendous time for the Party to get out pamphlets - we have still no pamphlet on war. If you want hard-backs, try it as an experiment and have a limited edition of say, 500 of the Russian Pamphlet.

Cde. Hardy (Pamphlets Cttee) said that because a publication has a hard back it need not be any larger than a pamphlet. It could still sell at about 10/6d. We may get it into the hands of people who prefer books in this form and are prepared to pay for it. There is no reason why 500 or so of the Russian Pamphlet should not be printed in an attractive form and see how they go through the bookstalls. The Party did arrange at one time with Unwins to publish "The Civil War in France",

"Socialism, Utopian & Scientific", "Revolution and Counter-Revolution", with our cover and under our name. This served a useful purpose.

Some delegates thought there could be no objection to including in one of our publications personal views which were in the nature of conjecture and not necessarily endorsed by the Party, provided this was made clear. It was pointed out also that stiff-backs can be displayed in Libraries and Universities where pamphlets do not lend themselves. Cde. P. Lawrence (Lewisham) said that the most important thing is to collect material, which is of great use to Party comrades themselves. Marketing is less important. One of the most frustrating things to Party members is the question of research: they have to carry this on alone and very little solid work gets done because of the limits of time. Some organisation and division of labour is required. There are many difficulties - interference with normal propaganda work. You get little opportunity in the Party for this kind of work. We have to rely too much on generalities with insufficient detail. For example, we need a more detailed view of the Bolshevik Revolution and its historic background.

This kind of work is vital. We need a detailed analysis of economic development and the programmes of actual Governments. It would give our speakers more authority on the platform. It is a question of priorities: we must write up our own text-backs - no-one can do it for us. One or two individuals should get together to carry out research on various themes over a period and produce something substantial, if only in roughed form. If this interferes with propaganda it is a sacrifice we have to make. It would enrich our case and make our speakers and writers more effective.

Guest speaker, Comrade Ford, of Central Branch was introduced by Cde. George. Comrade Ford who joined the Party in 1906, addressed Conference from the platform, saying that it was a great pleasure to see so many comrades in debate and representing the Branches and that he thought the new Pamphlet on Russia was a masterpiece. In the early 1900s he was an ardent religious worker and used to listen to S.P.G.B. speakers at Hyde Park Corner, and in this way had come across the new Party which had the nerve and verve to oppose the Social Democratic Party because it was reformist. In three months he had dropped his religious ideas after reading Dietzgen's "Positive Outcome of Philosophy", had attended Party meetings regularly and shortly afterwards became a member. He was imprisoned in the First World War for refusing to slaughter fellow-workers and in the Second, joined with other S.P.G.B. objectors in running meetings and a group in Edgware.

The Chairman thanked Cde. Ford on behalf of Conference.

#### PROPAGANDA

Item for Discussion: Paddington: "The need to devote greater emphasis in our propaganda to life in a socialist society and how socialism will work and the necessity of devoting more space in the "S.S" to discussion on this subject".

There was considerable discussion on this item. Some delegates felt it was important to give workers a clearer picture of life as it might be in a socialist society. Others thought that it was not for us to paint pictures of the future - our job is to criticise Capitalism. It should be sufficient to point out, as we do, on the platform and in the "S.S" that wealth will be produced for use, leaving something to people's imagination as human beings. We can already envisage a society without war or poverty, but we can only do this in general terms - a 'blue print' is not possible. The point was made by more than one delegate that Capitalism itself is changing rapidly its methods of production and transport at a fantastic rate and if we attempted to give details for the future we should need to revise our ideas every few years. We do not know what Capitalism will be like in the years to come. It was stated that Capitalism and Socialism are highly integrated and we are actually talking about Socialism when we are talking about Capitalism. We can say that, e.g. adulteration of food will not take place and statements of this nature, but in general, we can only put over priorities, e.g. no war, no want, no exploitation etc. It should be sufficient to make clear the waste and limitations of Capitalism.

A question was asked of the Pamphlets Committee as to why the colour of the cover of the Russian Pamphlet was such a subdued red instead of the brighter colour expected, and it was explained that as S.W. London Branch had complained that the date in the title, "1917-1967" would date the Pamphlet it was decided to tone down the colour to make the figures less prominent.

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There was little discussion on this. Stress was laid by one member on our out-of-date propaganda methods. Public Meetings with a speaker and a Chairman to open up where we can only hope to attract a few people are wasteful of Party effort. There is much to be learned from T.V. methods. We could have a panel of speakers on the platform and invite questions and discussion.

Mid-Herts. asked for information regarding the use of the Form E. Cde. Buchanan (Propaganda Cttee) said that this form should be sent as soon as possible for all propaganda meetings of any kind. Some Branches do not send any at all and others some months later.

Soho Square Meetings. Cde. George (Bloomsbury) said that these meetings were in danger of closing down through lack of support. He felt it was important to keep alive regular meetings in Central London and we should be looking into the reason for their lack of success. His Branch had been responsible for organising these meetings but they had relied upon the support of London members and their contacts. Perhaps indoor meetings on Sunday evenings were now out despite the fact that this venue was very central, in the heart of London and within yards of buses and Tube, and cafes in the surrounding area.

#### FINANCE

Item for Discussion: Southend: "Legacies and the use of money available for Party activities".

Cde. Cottis (Southend) stated that we do not want our funds to be absorbed in the day-to-day running of the Party. They would like the E.C. to appoint a Party Funds Organiser to get further funds. We may have some money at the moment but we should not convey the impression that we do not need money all the time.

Floor Resolution: Mid-Herts. "This Conference recommends that the E.C. enquire into the best ways of maintaining the value of legacies whilst awaiting their use for propaganda". Carried 12 - 9

Cde. Knight (Mid-Herts) stated that the E.C. is bound by rule only to put money into a Current or Deposit Account and it has already made a decision not to transfer funds to a Deposit Account. We think this is foolish. The value of money has fallen and is still falling: it is worth five times less than before the War. We would suggest that money be put into a Building Society or that we should build up a Trust to pay members full time.

It was stressed by several delegates that the best safeguard against inflation is to "invest" money in the Party - we need urgently considerable more office equipment, books and pamphlets for publication, and Head Office requires re-decorating both inside and outside.

Item for Discussion (Haringey): "Marxism and the Socialist Party". (a written statement was before delegates on this subject).

Cde. Buijk stated that Party speakers are in danger of over-simplifying our case, perhaps inevitably. We need to build up our theoretical knowledge so that we can take part more ably in discussions that arise. There is a tendency amongst members to take these simplifications as genuine historical materialism. We do not always remember that ownership is not just a question of legality. It is not true that Capitalism is necessarily based on legal ownership by a minority class. The dominant form here is backed up by legal title through the Courts. What about Russia? We would like the Party to expressly repudiate the view that there has been set down a pre-determined scheme of social development - Barbarism, Primitive Communism, Feudalism, Capitalism. Some of our speakers, when putting forward ideas of social development have based their case on Engels' "Origin of the Family" (based on a book by Lewis Henry Morgan - "Ancient Society", ignoring the research on social anthropology which has taken place in the meantime. Speakers ignore the fact that there are large parts of the world which have not passed through the various stages of Primitive Society, Feudalism, such as India, China, Indonesia, and Latin America. We should present our case in the light of information which has been discovered recently.

X Cde. McClatchie stated that there is legal ownership in Russia and the idea that societies go through certain stages of development is basically true, in spite of the fact that, as we know, there has been no feudalism in America. The basic discoveries of Marx and Engels are correct and the material which has been accumulated since is

only more facts. Cde. P. Lawrence (Lewisham) stated that he agreed with the statement prepared by Haringey Branch but that, in his opinion, there was no real need for it as the views expressed there have always been accepted by the Party. With regard to Russia, he thought there was no basic difference between the two systems. He went on to say that the Party has not said the last word on the development of Capitalism. There seems to be a bias against the view that there are significant developments taking place in Capitalist Society that have importance in relationship to the Socialist revolution. We are inclined to the view that Marx analysed Capitalist Society in the 19th Century and that since that time the social structure, social relationships, have not changed, which, although true, is not the same thing as saying that Capitalism has not changed. We should employ the analytical methods of Marx in evaluating these changes and relating their significance to our propaganda. There have been many changes in the social consciousness in terms of moral attitudes, ethics, nationalism and religious ideas. We need research into the effect of education and the breakdown of religious ideas on working-class consciousness and its significance to our propaganda - the effects of technology and the experience of class struggles since the 19th Century. The environment of the Party in 1967 is quite different from what it was in 1904. We should beware of saying there have been no significant changes. We tend to articulate our case in the idiom of past decades.

Cde. Cook (Birmingham) thought that the statement was destructive, aiming to clear up errors into which some speakers fall. He drew attention to Clause 4 of the D. of P. and said he felt that Cde. Buick was saying we should not be committed to this: but he should bear in mind that in much of the "scientific correction" which is going on there is a lot of special pleading for Capitalism. As we revise our ideas we should be careful not to pay lip-service to people who are intentionally putting forward capitalist ideas.

Cde. Cox (Paddington) said that we must accept the fact that there will be changes and we must explain to people what these changes mean - a re-examination of our theoretical background in sociology, politics and economics is invaluable. Cde. D'Arcy drew attention to Marx's Materialist Conception of History and his Labour theory of value, where wealth is shown as an accumulation of commodities. The first thing to do is to examine the commodity and you must examine the historical times that produced it. The prime mover in society is the economic one. No. 5 (of the statement) has torn this out of context, to mean that the Party should not put forward the view that every country must pass through the stages of Primitive

Communism, Chattel Slavery, Feudalism and Capitalism. We have never taken this view and we do not need to repudiate it. We criticise those who point to Russia because there could not be emerging there a strong socialist movement as the basic ingredients for the establishment of Socialism were not there. This does not contradict our general view that the establishment of socialism does not mean acceptance by the last hottentot. Only by applying the Marxian evaluation of society could the Party interpret events in Russia, but we have never said that Societies must all go through the same conditions.

Cde. Buick stated that the privileged class in Russia dominated their position because they control the machinery of Government - not by legal title. There is a difference between "legal ownership" and "control". He agreed that "Ancient Society" is fundamentally correct but that in some respects it needs to be revised. Party members should take note of these things.

The Executive Committee's Report to Conference was adopted.

Conference adjourned at 6 p.m.

#### FINANCIAL STATEMENT

<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenditure</u>	
Collections (incl. Rally)	£50.10. 0	Hall hire	£57.15. 0
Profit from Social	19. 0	Gratuity	5. 0. 0
" " Canteen	14.10. 6	Advertising	20. 0. 0
	£45.19. 6		£82.15. 0
			£45.19. 6
		Deficit	£36.15. 6

CORRECTION Discussion on Marxism on Page 11:-

The points attributed to Cde. McClatchie were not made by him but by delegates. Cde. McClatchie's contribution was; - 'that the basic position ~~of~~ Morgan was still accepted, i.e. development through the Old Stone Age, New Stone Age, Bronze and Iron Ages. Society in Western Europe had gone through Chattel Slavery, Feudalism and Capitalism (though some places like Venice had not experienced Feudalism). Since Morgan information had accumulated which modified some of his minor views but left unaffected his basic position. The objections that were raised referred to Morgan's views on promiscuity and the economic position of women. In Cde. McClatchie's opinion, the weight of evidence was in favour of Morgan's views'.